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THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

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THE glad message which every returning Eastertide but emphasizes is that Christ Jesus has "abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light." The resurrection is one of the fundamental, essential facts of the gospel history, and has, therefore, a perennial and unchanging interest.

Because it is so vital to our faith and hope, the questioning *Zeitgeist* of every age has busied itself with inquiry as to its reality and character. Our own time forms no exception; it has asked *its* questions, prompted thereto by conceptions born of the scientific and historical spirit. One of the results of this questioning has been to demand that we distinguish between "the Easter message" and "the Easter faith," and that we accept the latter, but reject the former as impossible in view of modern enlightenment. "The Easter faith" is the conviction that Jesus still lives with God. "The Easter message" is the story of the empty grave and of the various appearances of the risen Lord to the disciples. In other words, an actual resurrection, as the church has commonly understood it, did not take place, and yet Jesus lives.

This interpretation is at a long remove from the crude denials of a generation or two past. It seeks to keep the religious value of the doctrine, while denying the historical fact upon which religious values are supposed to rest. Anxious, however, as it is to preserve what it calls the kernel of the doctrine, it misses completely the emphasis which all Scripture puts upon the very side of the truth which makes the resurrection so significant. From one end of it to the other, the Bible views man as a complex personality. He is made up of soul and body—he is an embodied spirit. "The immortality of the soul" is not a scriptural expression. *Man* is immortal. Redemption includes the



"HE IS RISEN."

—Alex. Ender.

whole man. To strike out, therefore, that side of the truth which shows that the body as well as the spirit is to enter into the true conception of complete immortality is to miss the real climax of all the teaching of Scripture regarding the future of man.

Jesus "brought to light" this wondrous completeness by coming himself from the grave. He has shown us how the whole man is to be redeemed. This virtually has been the problem of all other faiths in regard to the life beyond. Jesus has solved it in that he made it clear to us that we are not to be disembodied spirits in his consummated kingdom. The *fact* of the resurrection of Jesus, therefore, is of the utmost importance.

It is the purpose of this article to call attention to the trustworthiness of our accounts regarding the fact, and then to point out its significance. No better order for the study of the resurrection can be given than that found in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. This order is as follows: (1) the fact of the resurrection and the witnesses thereto; (2) the import and importance of it; (3) the bearing of it upon the manner of our resurrection.

Let us first attend to the fact. As Paul was the last witness to Jesus' resurrection in order of time, so his first epistle to the Corinthians is an earlier testimony than our gospels in their present form. The Greeks, believing that matter was evil, had no use for a doctrine of the resurrection of the body. When, in his speech to the Athenians, Paul reached this teaching, trouble began at once (Acts 17:32). The whole point of his argumentation with these people, whenever this subject came up, was therefore to show them that Jesus had risen from the dead. There is really no point to the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians if this fact was not actual. "*First of all* I delivered unto you that which also I received, that Christ died for our sins; and that he *was buried*; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3). A little farther on he declares: "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain" (15:14). "Now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep" (15:20). These words form Paul's own interpretation of the meaning of

the vision to him on the Damascus road. He certainly does not leave out of *his* gospel "the Easter message" of an empty grave.

For convenience, the appearances which he mentions, and which the gospels give us, may be arranged in the following manner:

APPEARANCES AT JERUSALEM.

No.	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
1.....	28:9-10 ¹	16:9	24:34 (1 Cor. 15:5) 24:15, 31 24:36-44	20:16 20:19-23 20:26-29
2.....				
3.....				
4.....				
5.....				
6.....				

APPEARANCES IN GALILEE.

7.....	28 : 16-20 Also at same time (to 500 1Cor.15:7) (1 Cor. 15:7)	This appearance may have been in Jerusalem.		21:1-24
8.....				
9.....				

FINAL APPEARANCE NEAR JERUSALEM.

10.....			24:50 (See Acts 1:4-12)	
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A careful study of this table will make several things evident: (1) That these accounts are from different sources. Luke seems to have had a special source in his account of Passion Week. (2) That the narratives have in no way been harmonized. They are personal reminiscences, whose variations are natural to this kind of testimony. Hence discrepancies are no substantial argument against truthfulness. The more we know of the character of the gospels and the manner of their origin, the less reason have we to be disturbed over minor disagreements. Indeed, harmonization of all details into a perfectly jointed account is no longer an aim in the study of the gospels. They are not histo-

¹ STEVENS AND BURTON'S *Harmony of the Gospels* makes Nos. 1 and 2 parallel; ROBINSON'S changes the order of Nos. 1 and 2, putting No. 2 first.

ries, in our sense of the term, but memorabilia. (3) That these memorabilia bear witness to two facts: the empty grave, and the risen Lord. As these are just the two facts which constitute the Easter message, now said to be impossible, it is well to note the character of the witness to these facts.

That the stone had been rolled away and the grave left empty was the testimony, not simply of the disciples, but of the Roman soldiers who were set on guard. Indeed, the chief priests connived with the soldiers to palm off a story upon the governor that the body had been stolen. The account of the crucifixion, death, and burial is unquestionable. The old crass theory that Jesus swooned and, more dead than alive, got out of the tomb, is no longer worthy of consideration. Even Strauss laughed such a theory to scorn. Is it possible, then, to suppose that the men who assisted in a plot to steal the body could play such a rôle in history as did the apostles—proclaiming everywhere a resurrection—suffering all manner of contempt for their message, and at the same time urging men to the most exalted standard of living?

No, that is not possible. No theory, at the present time, which denies the fact of the resurrection is willing to go that far. Some form of a theory of visions is made to explain the situation. The favorite starting-point for this view is the statement made by Paul in Gal. 1:16, "it was the good pleasure of God to reveal his Son in me." There is perhaps no more interesting phase in the study of this theme than the psychological. The gospel records afford us an excellent field for work in this line. The attitude of the disciples up to almost the moment of the event itself is given us. Mark, too, how the sphere of visions widens—individuals, groups of eleven or more, five hundred, and then suddenly stop. Why is this? How does vision take so many forms, saying to Mary, "I am not yet ascended to my Father;" to Thomas, "reach hither thy finger;" to the disciples by the lake, "come and break your fast;" and to those on the way to Emmaus, "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" Can all these various situations be psychologically explained?

If so, what had in the meanwhile become of the body of Jesus?

Was it all this time in the hands of the Jews? Then why did they not produce it and confute these feverishly excited men with an absolute proof that there had been no resurrection? It could not have been in the hands of friends, unless they were gross impostors—a view which no theory today is willing to maintain. If neither friends nor foes had the body, where was it?

In every direction this vision theory runs up against stubborn, inexplicable obstacles. Considering all the evidence, the empty grave is most satisfactorily explained by the actual resurrection of Jesus. His veritable appearance accounts fully for the marvelous change of mind and purpose in those who, slow to understand his prophecies, were disheartened beyond expression by the black night of the crucifixion, and utterly at a loss in those days when he was in the tomb. Keim thinks he can satisfy himself by declaring that the change was brought about by God-inspired visions, but to him who has no philosophic prejudice against the supernatural, the event itself will offer the simpler explanation. It is surely better to believe that the faith of the disciples and the church rests upon the fact of the resurrection than that it rests upon God-inspired visions given to create belief in a fact which after all was not a fact.

The Easter message belongs with the Easter faith. Peter preached that message; Paul preached it; and the church ever since has made it the sure basis of its Easter faith.

Having thus looked at the surety of the fact, let us turn to ask its value for us. What is the significance of our Easter faith? The word "resurrection" applies literally to the appearance of Jesus from the grave. Does it have the same import for us? What do we mean when we say, "I believe in the resurrection of the body"? Assuredly not that this same body which is to be given to the grave shall at some time be called out again, as was the body of Jesus. Both Scripture and science are at one in the teaching that this body of flesh and blood disappears forever when the earth closes over it. The resurrection of Jesus, therefore, must be carefully studied to get from it the true meaning of our Easter faith. Paul argues that had Christ not risen, our faith and hope would alike be vain; but he also says explicitly

that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven—"thou sowest not the body that shall be." Jesus gave full proof to the disciples that the body which was placed in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb was the body which stood before them in the upper room and on the seashore; and yet we are not to come from the grave with our old physical bodies.

How are these facts to be related and understood? By a careful distinction in the twofold purpose of the resurrection of Jesus, and a study of the twofold series of facts which appear in his post-resurrection life. Had Jesus slept on in the tomb the sleep of death the religious value of all his work had been, so to speak, left "in the air." The glory of his beautiful life we should still have—marred, indeed, by his failure to fulfil his own prophecies, but yet beautiful in many an example of love and inspiration. We might have risen to the conception of his continued spiritual existence with the Father, but the resurrection is so interwoven with all our conceptions of his exaltation and spiritual power that it is difficult to think of Christianity without it. Certainly, the teaching of the immortality of *man* would have been without seal and pledge.

It was needful to give to physical eyes, to make a *fact* of history, his triumph over the grave. And so he came with the marks of the nails and of the spear-thrust, and to human ears and eyes he gave indisputable evidence that he had burst the bars of death. He was no ghost flitting about the hills of Judea, or along the Galilean lake. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye behold me having." He was the *incarnate* Lord, superior to death, bringing "life and incorruption to light."

Along with these facts is another series which show powers of another order. There is a mysterious side to that post-resurrection life. The limits of time and space do not seem to press upon him who appears and disappears; who ignores closed doors, and finally ascends into the clear sky to be hidden by a cloud from sight. Have we not in all this hints of the "spiritual body" of which Paul speaks? Is not the glory which shall be revealed in us, as far as *our* spiritual investiture is concerned, dimly foreshadowed here? It will forever remain a mystery what were the

relations of the material and spiritual in Jesus after his resurrection. By some the change from one to the other is conceived to have been gradual; by others, instantaneous; and possibly either way, at any time, according to the purpose in view.

It is only needful that we should know what the material appearance was for, and not make that the basis for our reasoning to *our* future state. The joyful faith of Easter morning is rather in that, being like him when with our spiritual bodies—that is, with bodies fitted to the spirit—we too shall be above the limits which here press us in, and shall know something of that glorified state when spirit and spiritual investiture shall alike be ready for exalted and never-wearying service.



"THE TRANSFIGURATION."

—*Raphael.*